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## *Ergonomics: A Weapon against Injuries*

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are injuries and illnesses affecting the body's muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, or spinal disks. Ergonomics is the main weapon in preventing MSDs. It is the science of fitting jobs to the people who do them. An ergonomics program is intended to reduce MSDs in workers who must reach, bend over, lift heavy objects, use continuous force, work with vibrating equipment, or do repetitive motions as part of their work. MSDs can lead to loss of strength, loss of range of motion, loss of muscle function, and loss of ability to do ordinary tasks.

### *Common symptoms of MSDs include:*

- ♦ Painful joints
- ♦ Pain, tingling, numbness in hands or feet
- ♦ Shooting or stabbing pains in the arms or legs
- ♦ Swelling or inflammation
- ♦ Burning sensation
- ♦ Pain in the wrists, shoulders, forearms or knees
- ♦ Fingers or toes turning white
- ♦ Back or neck pain
- ♦ Stiffness

### *Preventing MSDs:*

You and your supervisor can work together to improve your work environment to help you prevent problems such as back injuries and repetitive strain injuries.

- ♦ Adjust your work station. This might mean raising or lowering a chair, changing the level of your work bench or obtaining a platform to stand on. Adjusting the angle of a drafting board or repositioning a computer screen can greatly improve comfort and performance. You can also rearrange lighting to see your work without having to lean forward.
- ♦ Adapt your tools. Adjustments to tools such as longer, padded, or angled handles can lessen repetitive strain. Avoid handles which cut into the hand. Use tools designed to keep your hands, arms and back in a comfortable, natural position while you are working.
- ♦ Arrange your work. Lay out materials so that you can reach them without excessive stretching, twisting or bending. If you are assembling materials, arrange them so you can pick them up with a minimum of reaching. Avoid arrangements where you have to lean forward and reach at an angle. Store materials on a shelf rather than on the floor to minimize lifting.
- ♦ Take a break. Organize your work to allow you to switch from one task to another. This will help avoid back strain and repetitive strain. Take advantage of scheduled breaks to stretch and move around.
- ♦ Be aware. Pay attention to how you feel while you are working. Make adjustments in your work area to prevent strain on your muscles.



***Changing the way your workstation is arranged, or modifying a work procedure may be all it takes to prevent an MSD. This will help you to increase safety, health, productivity, and comfort. Ergonomics is for everyone!***

**ARMY SAFE  
IS ARMY STRONG**

